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FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

OF

THE BOARD

OF

LAND COMMISSIONERS,

FOR THE YEAR ENDING

SEPTEMBER 30, 1877.

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BOSTON:

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117 FRANKLIN STREET.  
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## Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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OFFICE OF THE LAND COMMISSIONERS, STATE HOUSE,  
BOSTON, Oct. 15, 1877.

To His Excellency ALEXANDER H. RICE, *Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.*

By Chapter 213 of the Acts of the year 1877, the Board of Commissioners on Public Lands and the Board of Agents of the Commonwealth for the Commonwealth flats at South Boston were abolished, and a new Board, of three members, under the name of Land Commissioners, created, with the powers and duties of both the before-named Boards. This Board of Land Commissioners have the honor to submit the following Report.

### THE BACK BAY LANDS.

The Board of Commissioners on Public Lands, before the expiration of their term of service, under the authority conferred upon them by chapter 286 of the Acts of the year 1874, had conveyed to the city of Boston that portion of the Cross-Dam, or Parker Street, which extends from Boylston Street continued, to the portion previously owned by said city; and they had also, by authority of the same Act, conveyed to abutting owners, for the consideration of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) paid to the Treasurer of the Commonwealth, all the rights of the Commonwealth in and to that other portion of said Cross-Dam which extends from Beacon Street to Commonwealth Avenue. There still remains with the Commonwealth that portion of said Cross-Dam which extends from Commonwealth Avenue to Boylston Street, which may, under authority of the aforesaid Act, be conveyed to abutting parties, and by this means facilitate the improvement of adjacent territory, and relieve the Com-

monwealth from its anomalous position as the owner of a highway on which it has no abutting land, and no pecuniary interest in its traffic or repair.

The unsold lands of the Commonwealth in the Back Bay amount to about four hundred thousand feet (400,000). They are all filled to grade, and are on all the several streets extending westward from the Public Garden. As a very large number of buildings have been erected the past season in the vicinity of these lands, the demand for them must soon revive, and sales be effected at nearly or quite the prices obtained for lots of corresponding value. A small amount of edgestones are yet to be set on the territory, and one lateral sewer to be constructed, this last to be paid for by purchasers of abutting lots.

It appears that the total amount of proceeds of sales of the Back Bay Lands is \$3,935,432.47. This includes the sum of \$305,000 paid in land to the contractors for filling in the early stages of the works, and the sum of \$1,000, paid by abutting parties on the Cross-Dam.

The total expenses for filling, grading, engineering, edgestones, and other matters incident to filling the lands for sale, up to the date of this Report, appears to be \$1,625,-832.67.

It will thus be seen that the net profit to the Commonwealth on the utilization of these lands, allowing the lowest possible estimate for those remaining unsold, will be considerably more than three millions of dollars. The value of the lands donated at different time for educational and other purposes, cannot be much less than one million of dollars.

In view of these results, it seems proper that the Commonwealth should guard its vendible interest in the other lands and flats now in charge of this commission with somewhat jealous care.

#### THE SOUTH BOSTON FLATS.

The project of reclaiming and utilizing the flats belonging to the Commonwealth near South Boston, has received much attention, on account of their extent and pecuniary and commercial value, and now the process of development is fairly entered upon.



The Board of Agents built a bulkhead, the outer line of which was about one thousand feet in the rear of the commissioners' line and nearly upon the proposed location of Northern Avenue, running five hundred feet easterly from the easterly line of the flats agreed to be conveyed to the Boston and Albany Railroad, thence at right angles southerly, two hundred feet. And the Boston and Albany Railroad, at the request of the agents, built, upon the division line between their said flats and those lying on the east belonging to the Commonwealth, a line of bulkhead, five hundred feet long, extending southerly from the first-mentioned point.

The expense of the seven hundred feet built by the agents was eight hundred and seventy-five dollars (\$875), which was paid out of the appropriation of 1876. This bulkhead was built for the purpose of retaining such material for filling as might be procured at a cheap rate, and was in concurrence with arrangements made between the Harbor Commissioners and the agents, and approved by the Governor and Council.

By careful estimate the filling contemplated above, has progressed as follows:—

On the area north of Eastern Avenue and east of Boston and Albany Railroad Flats, cubic yards . . . .	39,400
South of Eastern Avenue and east of the Boston Wharf Company's Lands, cubic yards . . . . .	80,560
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Making a total of . . . . .	119,960
cubic yards of filling deposited on the flats, and which gives the following apparent results:	

Approximate area filled *north* of Eastern Avenue:

To grade 1.50 . . . .	about 540,000 square feet.
" " 2.50 . . . .	" 300,000 " "
" " 3.00 . . . .	" 82,500 " "

Approximate area filled *south* of Eastern Avenue:

To grade 1.50 . . . .	about 1,660,000 square feet.
" " 2.50 . . . .	" 940,000 " "
" " 2.75 . . . .	" 633,000 " "
" " 3.00 . . . .	" 450,000 " "

This filling is now progressing satisfactorily and without expense to the Commonwealth.

The steamers and tugs plying in the harbor have, by order of the city authorities in charge of the harbor, and the joint action of this Board and the Harbor Commissioners, been compelled to place their ashes and slag upon the flats at a point easterly of the area above indicated and not included in the above statement; and results advantageous to the Commonwealth will soon be apparent from that method of filling.

The Board have not found it necessary as yet to build any extension of their bulkhead; and the non-completion of the contracts of the Boston and Albany Railroad for filling their flats, especially at the extension of Eastern Avenue, has prevented the Board from procuring any material for filling, except what is brought by water—as there is no point at which a team can conveniently or advantageously reach the area of the Commonwealth's flats, nor will there be, until the filling by the Boston and Albany Railroad has progressed much farther than at present. For this reason, the Board have not thus far expended any part of the two thousand dollars appropriated by the Legislature of the current year for the purpose of purchasing material to be dumped upon said flats, or in building bulkheads to secure the same in place. (See chap. 61 of the Resolves of 1877.)

No expense has been incurred by the new Board for any engineering works upon the flats, as it became apparent to this Board that the probable filling and opening of certain streets in advance of the general filling, and the nearer completion of the work already under contract,—especially that of the Boston and Albany Railroad and the Boston Wharf Company,—would afford such facilities for doing the necessary engineering work, as would materially reduce the expense, and render the work more perfect, and adapted with greater precision to the ends in view.

Also that in case any considerable area should be disposed of for railroad terminal purposes, then the area to be sounded at the expense of the Commonwealth would be by so much reduced. The work of sounding, in a proper manner, the principal part of the area of the flats and properly recording the results, will undoubtedly enhance the vendible



value of the property, because the soundings will indicate the character and extent of the piling or other foundations any superstructure will require in a given location. After the filling, the necessary soundings would be expensive. It is contemplated having this work completed before any very extensive filling is done. This, with other works, to be entered upon at the opening of next season, will require the employment of a suitable engineer and proper assistants, and necessitate an appropriation.

The appropriation last year to initiate these works has not been used, on account of the dissolution of the Board of Agents and the interruption of its duties, and the non-completion of the works that should precede them, and remains in the treasury.

An appropriation was made by the last Legislature at the request of the agents (chap. 61 of the Resolves of 1877) for the purpose of completing the purchase of flats as authorized by chapter 446 of the Acts of 1869, and authority given to the agents, and to this Board as their successors, to negotiate a settlement with certain claimants, or to purchase certain outstanding titles, with the proviso that no part of the appropriation should be used "until satisfactory evidence is furnished to the governor and council, that purchases, exchanges, or contracts, have been made by said agents, which shall finally settle and determine all questions and controversies, the settlement of which is provided for by the second of these Resolves, for an aggregate amount not exceeding the sum herein appropriated."

The Board has continued the negotiations referred to in the last report of the Board of Agents, but find that Mrs. Margaret Cains, wife of Mr. William Cains, of South Boston, the party in interest if not the owner, claiming one undivided seventh ( $\frac{1}{7}$ ) of a lot of one hundred and sixty-five (165) feet front on First Street bounded on B Street, is persistent in her determination to obtain terms from the Commonwealth not conceded by the Harbor Commissioners, in the purchases made by them in 1870 of the other owners in the same tract. The sum paid to each of the other six owners of a like interest in the same tract was \$3,300. The amount demanded by Mrs. Cains for the remaining  $\frac{1}{7}$  is \$14,614.00; a sum

largely in excess of the appropriation, and greatly beyond the present value of the property.

The owners of the unpurchased three-eighths ( $\frac{3}{8}$ ) of the "Fan Piece," have, after diligent search, been traced and found, some of whom are in San Antonio, Texas, and one in the State of New York. Negotiations by mail for the purchase of that undivided interest are now pending.

The plan of the flats, indicating the area to be devoted to commercial uses, and that to general uses, as required by the Act creating the Board of Agents, has received the attention of this Board; but the action of the Legislature in abolishing the Board of Agents, required them to suspend action in that regard; and this Board, organized in July, found it impossible to obtain the necessary conferences with business men and officials during the months of July and August, the time for vacations among the class with which the Board desired to confer; but now much of preliminary work has been done in personal conference, and arrangements and appointments for the immediate future, and the whole subject will receive the attention its importance demands.

Many suggestions and projects, that may have more or less control over the ultimate result, have been made and proposed by various parties, and received consideration; such as plans for reaching the flats by the New York and New England Railroad cut,—by tunnelling Fort Point Channel,—by tunnelling South Boston,—by reaching the flats by an elevated railway, &c.

The absence of Mr. Edward Atkinson in Europe has had an influence in suspending action in connection with the B. and N.W. Railway.

The Board, however, do not consider the delay in reporting the plan as at all detrimental to the interests of the Commonwealth, as the demand does not yet indicate particular uses for the particular locations, while the general idea is outlined and acted upon by the Board, which awaits events to suggest any required modifications.

An interview was had, towards the close of September, with the new Board of Harbor Commissioners, at which the duties of the two boards in regard to the South Boston flats were fully discussed; and it was found that no difference of opinion existed between the members of the two boards



as now constituted. The contract for filling the twenty-five-acre piece, which has been in charge of the Harbor Commissioners, will be completed by the first of January next, as we are informed, and then this Board will assume the charge of all the Commonwealth's lands and flats at South Boston.

The Board has been notified by the city of Boston to attend a meeting with its committee on streets, on the 31st of October, in regard to the filling of certain streets as required by the indentures of June 24, 1873.

The Board is also in communication with the Boston and Albany Railroad Company in regard to the flats in South Boston, purchased by them of the Commonwealth, and have an appointment with a committee of said railroad company for a conference at an early date.

But as neither these matters, nor others of importance which the Board desire to submit for consideration, can be attended to before the time fixed by law for making this Report (which in the present case covers a period of only three months), it is proposed to make a supplementary statement, provided further legislation shall be deemed necessary.

WILLARD P. PHILLIPS,  
EDW'D C. PURDY,  
HORACE C. BACON,

*Land Commissioners.*







